

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-8 without prejudice or disclaimer and enter the following new claims:

~~Subj~~ 9. (New) A biodegradable hydrogel comprising a network of polymer chains, wherein said network contains polymer backbones which are interconnected to one another through spacers formed by crosslinked units, wherein the spacers contain, between said polymer backbone and the crosslinked unit, one bond which is hydrolysable under physiological conditions.

10. (New) The hydrogel of claim 9, wherein said one bond which is hydrolysable under physiological conditions is a carbonate ester bond.

11. (New) The hydrogel of claim 10, wherein said carbonate ester bond is derived from carbonyl di-imidazole.

12. (New) The hydrogel of claim 9, wherein said polymer backbones are derived from a water-soluble polymer.

13. (New) The hydrogel of claim 10, wherein said polymer backbones are derived from a water-soluble polymer.

14. (New) The hydrogel of claim 11, wherein said polymer backbones are derived from a water-soluble polymer.

15. (New) The hydrogel of claim 12, wherein said water-soluble polymer is dextran or a derivatised dextran.

16. (New) The hydrogel of claim 13, wherein said water-soluble polymer is dextran or a derivatised dextran.

17. (New) The hydrogel of claim 14, wherein said water-soluble polymer is dextran or a derivatised dextran.

18. (New) The hydrogel of claim 9, wherein the crosslinked units are based on units selected from the group consisting of acrylate, methacrylate, and hydroxymethacrylate units.

19. (New) The hydrogel of claim 9, further comprising a drug.

20. (New) The hydrogel of claim 19, wherein the drug is a proteinaceous material.

21. (New) A crosslinkable polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, comprising a hydrophilic polymeric backbone and at least one spacer, the spacer comprising one bond which is hydrolysable under physiological conditions and at least one crosslinkable group.

22. (New) The crosslinkable polymer of claim 21, wherein said one hydrolysable bond is a carbonate ester bond.

23. (New) The crosslinkable polymer of claim 22, wherein said carbonate ester bond is derived from carbonyl-di-imidazole.

24. (New) The crosslinkable polymer of claim 20, wherein said polymeric backbone is derived from dextran or derivatised dextran.

25. (New) The crosslinkable polymer of claim 20, wherein the crosslinkable group is selected from the group consisting of methacrylate, acrylate, and hydroxyethyl methacrylate.

26. (New) A crosslinked polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, obtained by crosslinking the crosslinkable polymer of claim 21.

27. (New) A crosslinked polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, obtained by crosslinking the crosslinkable polymer of claim 22.

28. (New) A crosslinked polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, obtained by crosslinking the crosslinkable polymer of claim 23.

29. (New) A crosslinked polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, obtained by crosslinking the crosslinkable polymer of claim 24.

30. (New) A crosslinked polymer capable of forming a hydrogel, obtained by crosslinking the crosslinkable polymer of claim 25. *Claim 25*

31. (New) A method for preparing a hydrogel, which method comprises crosslinking the crosslinkable polymers as defined in claim 26 in an aqueous medium.

32. (New) A method for preparing a hydrogel, which method comprises crosslinking at least two crosslinkable polymers as defined in claim 27.

33. (New) A method for preparing a hydrogel, which method comprises crosslinking at least two crosslinkable polymers as defined in claim 28.

34. (New) A method for preparing a hydrogel, which method comprises crosslinking at least two crosslinkable polymers as defined in claim 29.

35. (New) A method for preparing a hydrogel, which method comprises crosslinking at least two crosslinkable polymers as defined in claim 30.

36. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein a drug is present during the crosslinking step.

37. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein the drug is a proteinaceous material.